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From: DAVID YENNOR
Sent: Wed 4/2/2014 6:54:48 AM
Subject: \$35M Initiative Seeks to Safeguard Water Quality, from Highlands to Delaware Bay - NJ Spotlight

The 2014 Flood Control Plan being presented by the Army Corps of Engineers, including a Flood Tunnel costing Billions of Taxpayer Dollars, does nothing to stop the causes of the flooding. The USACE admits that stopping the source of the flooding not their charge.

The \$35M initiative by the William Penn Foundation outlined in this article does abate the source of the problem and at a much lower cost. To not pursue an initiative to abate the source of the flooding is like leaving the faucet running while trying to mop up the overflow.

Christie's NJDEP continues to allow the faucet to run, to cause more flooding, by approving building projects in the Highlands as well as flood plains and has no proposals to stop the source of the flooding. See the DEP's proposals here: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/passaicriver/>

So the question is, what are the real Goals of the NJDEP and USACE? Follow the money!!!

The ACE Flood Projects would encourage continued **lucrative construction/building projects** in the Highlands which only exacerbates flooding below. The Flood Control Plan will result in huge **multi-billion dollar construction contracts**, especially for building the Tunnel.

Taxpayer money needs to be invested in abating the Cause of the Flooding and not just mopping up the flooding downstream. Watershed lands need to be protected. There MUST be a moratorium on ALL building in the Highlands and in the flood plains.

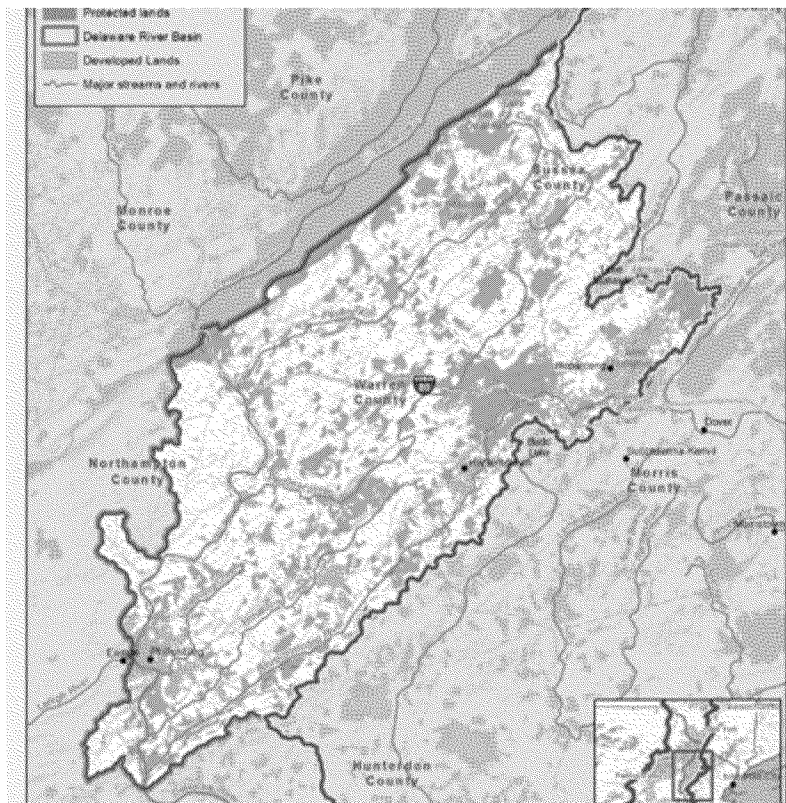
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<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/03/31/statewide-initiative-strives-to-safeguard-water-quality-from-highlands-to-delaware-bay-nonprofit-foundation-s-35-million-effort-aims-to-slow-development-protect-aquifer-reduce-pollution-in-sensitive-areas/>

INITIATIVE SEEKS TO SAFEGUARD WATER QUALITY, FROM HIGHLANDS TO DELAWARE BAY

JON HURDLE | APRIL 1, 2014

Nonprofit foundation's \$35 million effort aims to slow development, protect aquifer, reduce pollution in sensitive areas



NJ Highlands Aquifer

Water supplies on millions of acres in New Jersey will get additional protection from a wide-ranging initiative that aims to slow development, reduce agricultural runoff and prevent the depletion of a major aquifer, according to a report released Tuesday by a leading foundation and more than 40 participating environmental groups.

The William Penn Foundation, a Philadelphia-based supporter of environmental and other causes, is providing \$35 million to help buy land in sensitive areas or to create easements that will permanently prevent residential or commercial development that contribute to water-quality degradation.

The funding will also support a range of other actions such as the removal of dams, eradication of invasive species, repair of leaky septic systems, restoration of areas that help to recharge aquifers, and public education to encourage protection of water sources.

The initiative is part of an ambitious program to improve water quality throughout the Delaware River watershed from upstate New York to the mouth of the Delaware Bay, an area that supplies water to some 15 million people, and which advocates say is being threatened by deforestation, energy development, chemical runoff from farms and lawns,

and an increasing area of impervious surface.

“The Delaware River watershed is a critical resource for communities in New Jersey, New York and the entire region,” said Judith Enck, a regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in a statement. “Preventing pollution from entering the Delaware River and its watershed is the single most effective strategy to ensure that the watershed is protected.”

Officials said the initiative is unprecedented in terms of the size of the investment in a single watershed, and the number of environmental groups participating.

Across the watershed, the initiative will focus on eight ecologically significant “sub-watershed clusters,” two of which -- the Highlands and the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer -- are in New Jersey.

Water quality in the Highlands area, bordering the Poconos and the Kittatinny Ridge, is being degraded by nutrient pollution, topsoil loss and siltation of streams because of agricultural runoff, the report said.

The area loses about 3,000 acres of forest to development every year, and suffers from failing septic systems and sewer overflows in towns including Hackettstown, Bloomsbury and Belvidere. Dams across waterways degrade stream habitat and store pollutants, while runoff from local corporate and residential lawns leaks fertilizer into waterways, the report said.

Ambitious plans

Using matching funds, the program plans to spend some \$32 million over the next three years to buy land, reduce runoff, restore flood plains, remove dams, and educate the public on the need to protect water sources.

By 2017, the Highlands program aims to protect 4,000 acres of forest, restore 300 acres of farmland, and help three municipalities increase their use of easements, among other targets. It will strive to improve the quality of drinking water, protect the headwaters of local streams, and serve as a test of how well local conservation efforts can complement each other, officials said.

Implementation of the measures throughout the watershed will be done by local environmental groups.

In the Highlands, this will include the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, the Musconetcong Watershed Association, the North Jersey Highlands Coalition, and eight other organizations. The participants have been given a total of \$1.8 million in foundation funds for the project.

In South Jersey, the vast Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer supplies more than 35 billion gallons

of water annually for drinking, agriculture and industry but is being depleted by water withdrawals that are not replaced when they enter sewers as runoff, or simply evaporate when used for irrigation, the report said.

Aquifer recharge is also reduced by an increase of paved ground in seven South Jersey counties spread out over 2 million acres.

“Pumping water for human uses has lowered the water table, dried wetlands, lessened stream flow, and reduced freshwater discharge to coastal estuaries, the foundation’s report said.

The foundation has awarded \$2.4 million to 10 local groups including the American Littoral Society, the Natural Lands Trust, and the Pinelands Preservation Alliance to prevent deforestation, reduce water withdrawal from the aquifer, limit destructive practices like off-road vehicle use in forests, and monitor aquifer depletion.

The program aims to protect 6,500 acres of the area that recharges the aquifer, and to reduce groundwater consumption by 3 percent by 2017 through a public awareness campaign.

Across the watershed, the initiative aims to complement state and federal conservation programs such as those run by the Delaware River Basin Commission, an interstate regulator that oversees water quality in the 330-mile-long watershed in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

According to the DRBC, water quality in the basin has stabilized but is threatened by deforestation, while some aquatic species are struggling to survive.

In its 2013 “State of the Basin” report, the DRBC said water quality was “holding steady,” that regulated chemicals are stable or decreasing, and that among fish species, striped bass were “thriving.”

But forests have disappeared from the basin at the equivalent of 45 football fields a week over the last decade, while bayshore marshes are being eroded or inundated by sea-level rise.

The DRBC is not part of the William Penn initiative but was a “key informant” in its preparation, said Andrew Johnson, senior program officer for the foundation’s Watershed Protection Program. Although the new initiative shares many objectives with the regulator, there will be “no duplication” of effort, he said.

The new help for water quality may offset a shortage of public funding that has hampered DRBC’s work in recent years. Carol Collier, the commission’s recently departed executive director, has blamed the federal government’s failure to meet its funding commitments since the mid-1990s as an impediment to DRBC research on potential challenges to water quality such as natural gas drilling or climate change.

DRBC spokesman Clarke Rupert said the new initiative doesn't lessen the need for the federal government to restore its funding, which could be used for large-scale studies, as opposed to the local projects that are being funded by the foundation.

Rupert said the DRBC welcomes the contribution of many independent groups to the health of the watershed.

"The foundation's initiative is a welcome addition to the other good environmental work being performed in the basin," he said.

Delaware Riverkeeper Network, an environmental nonprofit that is not a participant, also welcomed the plan as a major step toward protecting water quality.

"The Delaware Riverkeeper Network absolutely supports this important investment in the health of our waterways from water quality to ecological protection and restoration," said DRN head Maya van Rossum, in an email. "This significant investment in the variety of organizations it supports will result in important protection for the Delaware River watershed."

Van Rossum said the effort highlights the need to make permanent a DRBC moratorium on drilling for natural gas in the basin, a proposal that critics say would contaminate the watershed with toxic materials used in the controversial gas-extraction process known as fracking.

"With so much money and effort being invested in protecting and restoring our river, its tributaries and watershed for the benefit of present and future generations, how can any right-minded decision maker even consider lifting the moratorium?" she said.

The William Penn Foundation is a funder of NJ Spotlight.